



Lorraine's monument to the A. E. F.

A Doughboy Returns to France

Continued from Preceding Page.

the Meuse River. It was impossible for me to remember accurately many things which occurred in the tornado of battle, and I was somewhat apprehensive that I would not identify the position again, although I had gone over it many times in my imagination. Back of the lines there the ruined villages looked so much the same as the other towns we had seen in various sectors of France that there was little for me to recognize. However, when we arrived in the vicinity of Chatoncourt the country around took on a more familiar aspect, and the barren hills in front of us reminded me distinctly that I had passed that way before.

Following the road, we began the ascent of the Cote de l'Oie, from the top of which American forces had started to attack on September 26. When we reached the summit the great battlefield of the Meuse-Argonne was spread out before us. To our right the Meuse River flowed past Forges on the one side, Brabant and Consenvoye on the other. Immediately ahead of us, at the bottom of the hill, the famous Forges Brook cut through the road, while Forges Wood, scene of the brilliant attack of the Thirty-third Division, was across the valley. To the left in the distance loomed the heights of Montfaucon, while many kilometers away, on the western horizon, lay the black hills of the Argonne Forest. Here was unrolled before our eyes the scene of America's greatest battle, the battle which leaders of all armies have declared to be the hardest fought of any in the history of the world—the battle which forced the capitulation of Germany.

I am unable to describe the sensation I felt when I first glimpsed the line of trench that we had held along the Meuse. I had scarcely hoped that it would still be there. So many of the trenches have now been filled in that I feared this would have disappeared also. However, it remains and in fairly good condition. Of course, the mud had washed in and filled it up partially, while weeds and grass were abounding in it, yet it was recognizable. Searching carefully I even found what was left of the little dugout that I had myself inhabited. Never very strong, it had failed to withstand the elements as well as it had the German shells and the roof had tumbled in. How vividly I remembered the last night that four of us were harbored there, and how we talked of what we should do when we were able to go home! The next day we went over the top to the attack. Of the four two were killed and one seriously wounded. I never saw them again.

Some moments elapsed before I was able to leave the spot. It was so strangely, mysteriously quiet now without the storm of battle, and particularly without the rest of the "bunch." However, the war no longer seemed to be such a weird dream; as Brabant on the one hand appeared unusually familiar, while the damaged church

spire of Consenvoye, rising just across the river, seemed to invite us once more to sight over to it in orienting our maps.

One of the first places that we visited was Montfaucon. This was one of the principal objectives of the initial Argonne drive. The heights were captured by the Seventy-ninth Division from the Atlantic States on the second day of the offensive, aided by the 37th Ohio Division. On the summit of the hill was an old house which had been fortified by the Germans to afford a safe lookout for the Crown Prince. We climbed up into the tower which we understood he had often used, and marveled at the magnificence of the panorama. From here it was possible to observe almost the entire Argonne battlefield. The adjacent villages of Ivoir, Nantillois and Septsarges, which were taken respectively by the Thirty-seventh, Seventy-ninth and Fourth Divisions before Montfaucon fell, appeared to be almost at the bottom of the hill.

We traversed the sectors of practically all of the American divisions engaged in the battle. The hardships and dangers of the Argonne were shared equally by all the different commands. This fact is obvious to any one making a survey of the battlefield as a whole.

No part of the terrain nevertheless, could be worse than the main section of the Argonne Forest, which covers a large area on the western side of the battlefield. We spent a whole day in the heart of this forest, and were more than amazed at the tremendous extent of the territory which is virtually impenetrable. And yet, no matter how deeply we penetrated into the forest, into the thickets, away from all paths, there we found eloquent traces of Americans. It is with a curious impact that as one fights his way through the fastnesses of these forests he comes upon an old O. D. raincoat dropped by some doughboy.

Entering the forest from Vienne le Chateau and Binerville we saw where the 77th Division of New York had hammered its way through this terrible country. We traced out the ravine where the "Lost Battalion" hurled its imperishable defiance at the Boche, and were able to read in the remains of equipment we saw stories of the men who set this shining mark of American valor. At one place, near where an American coat and gas mask were lying, we came to a pile of used cartridges and a bayonet. Near at hand was a wrapped legging on the ground, while a blood stained bandage fluttered to the wind from the branches of a bush. Close at hand was a rusty "corned wille" can with an army spoon beside it. That was all. But certainly the story here was, visibly, that an American who had been fighting here was wounded in the leg and then lay at this spot until succor came—or until he died.

This is the seventh of a series of articles. The eighth will appear in an early issue.

"She sat there spell-bound. It could not have occurred to her to think these people sophisticated; they were all so kind, she thought to herself, so kind and generous and interesting. Her heart went out to them all. Her radiance increased with each instant. The corners of her mouth went up; her sweet, child-like laugh melted into the general laughter. All this light and colour and sound was superb. It was vivacity and richness, music and poetry, an unequalled stimulant to gaiety and the senses. It was life as she had dreamt of it. There was a spice of daring in such contact with the unknown and the exciting, and daring was her ideal. She was in a beautiful dream of delight."

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